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ABSTRACT

The paper focuses on the special adaptations made at Gallaudet College (Washington, DC) to train hearing impaired students to teach social studies to hearing students at the elementary and secondary levels. It is pointed out that all instruction at Gallaudet employs the simultaneous communication method of voice and signed English while using visual reinforcement of ideas, concepts, and techniques. Teaching adaptations are discussed for each of eight key course topics: social studies concepts and generalizations, discussion skills, use of multimedia, role play, simulation games, current events, geographic skills, and multicultural education. Noted among the adaptations for practicum work is the use of a classroom sign language interpreter. (SB)

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PREPARING THE HEARING-IMPAIRED SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER: SPECIAL CHALLENGE TO A SPECIAL GROUP

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Introduction

When my fellow educators learn that I am preparing hearing-impaired college students to become teachers in regular school classrooms, they often stare in apparent skepticism, or applaud what seems to be a herculean task. In actuality, the task should be cause for neither skepticism nor great wonderment, though it presents fascinating challenges to a teacher educator with normal hearing.

In 1980, Gallaudet College, the world's only accredited liberal arts college for the deaf and long known for its preparation of teachers of the deaf, embarked upon a new venture -- to provide hearing-impaired undergraduates with all of the prerequisites for certification in "regular" education before they may move to graduate level specialization in deaf education. This development was triggered by the rapidly increasing number of states passing certification laws which require such prior qualifications of all future teachers in special education situations. Of course, the challenge of preparing a pre-service teacher, who is herself or himself handicapped, to work with non-handicapped children is considerable.

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Social studies is, of course, one of the requisite curriculum and methods areas for elementary education majors, and is also one of the secondary education specializations for this teacher education program, which structurally resembles most undergraduate teacher preparation programs.

In this analysis, we shall focus on the special adaptations which we make in training hearing-impaired future teachers to teach social studies (both at the elementary and secondary levels), and will also take a look at the successes and problems of these students when they begin to teach social studies in the practicum setting of a "normal" public school classroom with hearing children. We suspect that there may be some special lessons for all social studies educators embedded within or still new and evolving experience.

Pre-Service Curriculum and Methods Experience

The pre-service curriculum and methods course in social studies for elementary and secondary Education Majors at Gallaudet consists of the same range of topics which would be found in many such courses across the continent. One general adaptation which must occur for this special group, however, is in the mode of communication during the course. All instruction at Gallaudet College employs the "simultaneous communication method" of voice and signed English at the same time. In addition, as with educating the hearing-impaired person at all age levels in most subject areas, it is more essential than with hearing persons in this pre-service course that the instructor use continuous visual reinforcement of ideas,

concepts, and techniques. Thus, two general adaptations permeate the entire pre-service course: communication through sign language, and emphasis on visual presentation of ideas and materials.

Let us now look at several key course topics: concepts and generalizations, discussion skills, multi-media, role-play, simulation, current events, geographic skills, and multi-cultural education. We shall discuss in connection with each, the teaching adaptations that we have made for this group of students in this pre-service course.

1. Social Studies Concepts and Generalizations. Because the American Sign Language (with its structure and vocabulary that is entirely independent of English*) is the first language of many deaf persons, the use of a course text written in college-level English requires the instructor to give special attention to detailed explanation of concepts and generalizations from the social sciences which may not be previously familiar in English to these special students. Thus, the general pacing of such a pre-service course is necessarily somewhat slower than for hearing persons whose first language is English.

2. Social Studies Discussion Skills. For many social educators, classroom discussion lies at the heart of teaching methodology. Such is no less true for the hearing-impaired. Practicing discussion skills (inquiry techniques, small-group discussions,

*Different from Signed English mentioned earlier, which is a manually coded form of English using English word order and general structure.

etc.), is easily done in the context of such a pre-service methods course. But preparing the hearing-impaired pre-service teacher to then implement these skills with real-life hearing children immediately presents a communication challenge. Thus, we emphasize the appropriate ways to use a classroom sign language interpreter to assist the teachers-in-training to set up, carry out, and analyze discussion activities with pupils. We will describe the practicum setting further in a later section below.

3. Use of multi-media. One of the hallmarks of the social studies "revolution" of the 1960's was the breaking away from nearly exclusive reliance on the printed text, toward the more regular use of other classroom media as well. For a deaf person, this emphasis is clearly easier to master than for the hearing person because throughout his or her education, the visual medium (use of demonstration, gesture, manipulative materials, and various types of visual machine projection) has been essential to presentation of material in most subjects. Thus, we find a more rapid grasp of the importance of multi-media for social studies among these future teachers than for hearing pre-service teachers.

4. Role-play. No particular problems are evident in these students' understanding of the applications of role-play techniques to the teaching of concepts from the social sciences. However, stimulating the students to be willing to actually enact practice role-play

situations in the context of the course, again appears easier for the instructor to do than with hearing pre-service students. Why? Probably because sign language as a medium of communication has previously acclimated students so well to spontaneous gestural "dramatizations" of situations and ideas that spontaneous role-play poses no threat to the student.

5. Simulation games. In this area of teaching skill, we have found that some initial extra time was needed for explanation and visual reinforcement of sometimes complex game rules and procedures, but only because of vocabulary difficulties. Once these terms are mastered, however, students enthusiastically participate in and comprehend the appropriate applications of simulation gaming to teaching social studies. The debriefing stage -- so essential to appropriate follow-up to all simulation experiences -- becomes as lively a discussion as with any group of hearing pre-service teachers who have just acquired an experiential base for a previously abstract social science concept.

6. Current Events. The inclusion of current events on a regular basis in any social studies program remains critical to children's understanding of the continuity of social behavior in the present. However, preparing the hearing-impaired teacher to make current events a component of his or her teaching, presents another challenge: the hearing-impaired trainees' awareness of what is happening in the world is often limited to the printed medium

because of the impossibility of hearing the radio and the still woefully inadequate number of captioned television news programs. Thus, the initial task for the social studies methods course instructor in this area is first to expose students to the ways to find out, and remain aware of, what is going on in the world at a level beyond the superficial. Once done, however, the methodology of applying current events to the classroom is of no particular difficulty for these teachers-to-be.

7. Geographic Skills. We have fortunately progressed to an era in social studies where we are remembering the importance of geography as a social science, not as a separate discipline, but as an integratable body of skills to be taught to children in the context of studying periods in history, regions, cultures, or other thematic topics in social studies. Yet, because geography was for many of our current pre-service teachers a neglected school subject in their own education, we find it essential to take some special time for teaching our trainees some geographic skills and concepts in the context of the pre-service course. For the same reasons outlined in number 3 above, however, these concepts and skills are somewhat easier for the hearing-impaired student possibly because geography in some of its applications is a highly visual discipline. However, again, we have found that some additional time is needed for teaching these concepts and terminology because of the "English-as-a-second-language" phenomenon to which we referred earlier.

8. Multi-cultural education. This important element of the social studies is, (perhaps surprisingly to the hearing teacher-educator) one of the simplest to prepare the hearing-impaired pre-service teacher to teach with real depth of understanding. Why? Because the great majority, if not all, of hearing-impaired persons have themselves experienced social discrimation, misunderstanding, and bias at many junctures as they have tried to function in a hearing world with their "invisible handicap." For that reason alone, these students readily comprehend the importance and techniques of teaching school children about the many varieties of peoples (racial, ethnic, religious, and handicapped) who exist in our pluralistic society, and about the problems and possible solutions that are associated with living together in such a world.

The Practicum Experience

What, then, happens when these students try to apply the ideas and skills from such a pre-service course to teaching hearing children in the context of student-teaching? The adaptations described above in the pre-service course content have their counterparts during this application stage.

Briefly, these hearing-impaired student teachers make the following adapations as they begin their practicum work in social studies with hearing children:

1. The use of a classroom sign-language interpreter is essential when doing any verbal task requiring lecture, explanation, discussion, or individual consultation.

Once the hearing children understand that the interpreter is only the "ears" of the student-teacher and not another "teacher," classroom communication becomes surprisingly smooth.

2. The additional time needed in the pre-service course for the hearing-impaired teacher-trainees to fully understand social science concepts in English continues to be reflected in their daily preparation time for teaching social studies in the practcum setting. The student-teachers report a continuing necessity to study pupil materials carefully in advance and to seek prior explanations of some terminology from the Cooperating Teacher. By the same token, because their expressive English is at times similar to that of any user of English as a second language (i.e., not always syntactically "correct"), the student-teachers find that they must take additional time to check in advance the structure of the written communications which they plan to give the students in such forms as descriptions, assignments, feedback to children on written work, and written test directions.

3. Hearing children rapidly demonstrate first, empathy, and later, understanding of the special communication stages needed in working with a person who has a special communication problem. Although we have no empirical evidence at this point to prove it, we have hypothesized that the children's apparent empathy for a hearing-impaired young adult in the classroom has the potential to increase in children their general empathy and understanding

for those who are different from themselves in other ways -- a major goal of all of the social studies.

4. As the result of working with a hearing-impaired student-teacher, Cooperating Teachers (all persons with normal hearing) appear to have increased their own sensitivity to the importance of clear communication and definition of terms to their own pupils.

Additional data on general reactions of hearing parents, principals, and children to this unusual experience is currently being gathered, but such data lie beyond the focus of this article.

Conclusion

Thus, we have examined both the pre-service course and practicum stages for the hearing-impaired pre-professional who is preparing for certification in "regular education." What can social studies educators in general learn from our experience with such a small and special group? Other than the specific data cited above on adaptations needed if the reader should ever have to prepare hearing-impaired pre-service teachers for the "regular" classroom, we believe that the key lesson is that the hearing-impaired person -- indeed the person with any "handicap" — has the potential to become a teacher of social studies with apparent parity (and in some cases, superiority) with comparison to the normally hearing pre-service teacher.

We must not unduly minimize the extra work and adaptations needed and the acknowledged challenge of classroom communication for these trainees.

But, in summary, the hearing-impaired teacher is undeniably able to function effectively as a teacher of social studies. The added advantages cited earlier for hearing children of having an adap ~d but direct learning experience with a communicatively handicapped person, make this teacher-education experience a very good risk indeed for all concerned.